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## Plays Studied in Junior and Senior High Schools

By JESS R. BEARD

Graduate Student, University of Illinois

### Purpose:

This study was made to determine: (1) what plays are studied in grades seven through twelve; (2) the frequency of inclusion of plays; and (3) the correlation or discrepancy in grade placement.

### Materials Used:

The report is based upon a survey of fifty-four textbooks suitable for use in grades seven through twelve. All textbooks surveyed were published between 1932 and 1945. Six texts were surveyed in grade seven; six in grade eight; nine in grade nine; nine in grade ten; twelve in grade eleven; and twelve in grade twelve. The bibliography shows the grade placement of the texts surveyed.

With the exception of one partial play,<sup>1</sup> all plays printed in the texts are included in the study.

### Plays Studied in Grades Seven Through Twelve:

The survey of the textbooks showed that plays of various length are studied. A number of short, one-act plays are studied in the seventh grade; by the twelfth grade the five-act tragedies of Shakespeare are studied. Table A gives a summary of the

<sup>1</sup> Balcony scene only from "Romeo and Juliet," *The Realm of Reading—Heritage*; Barnes and others, American Book Company, 1940.

TABLE A  
TYPES OF PLAYS INCLUDED IN TEXTS SURVEYED

Type of play	Different plays	Frequency of inclusion
Plays by Shakespeare.....	5	32
Non-Shakespearean:		
Five act.....	2	5
Four act.....	3	3
Three act.....	3	4
Two act.....	1	1
One act.....	68	104
Radio-drama.....	6	6
Total.....	88	155

various types of plays studied throughout the six years. The second column gives the number of different plays included in the fifty-four texts; the last column indicates the frequency of inclusion of each type of play. For example, in all grades there

TABLE B  
TYPES OF PLAYS INCLUDED IN THE VARIOUS GRADES

Type of play	Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 9	
	Number of different plays	Frequency of inclusion	Number of different plays	Frequency of inclusion	Number of different plays	Frequency of inclusion
Plays by Shakespeare.....	..	..	3	3	3	8
Non-Shakespearean:						
Five act.....	..	..	..	..	..	..
Four act.....	..	..	..	..	..	..
Three act.....	..	..	..	..	..	..
Two act.....	..	..	..	..	..	..
One act.....	9	9	7	7	13	14
Radio-drama.....	1	1	3	3	..	..
Total.....	10	10	13	13	16	22
Type of play	Grade 10		Grade 11		Grade 12	
	Number of different plays	Frequency of inclusion	Number of different plays	Frequency of inclusion	Number of different plays	Frequency of inclusion
Plays by Shakespeare.....	3	8	1	1	1	12
Non-Shakespearean:						
Five act.....	1	2	1	1	2	2
Four act.....	1	1	1	1	2	2
Three act.....	1	1	1	2	2	3
Two act.....	1	1	1	1	..	..
One act.....	16	19	18	27	18	27
Radio-drama.....	1	1	1	1	..	..
Total.....	23	32	22	32	25	46

are five different plays by Shakespeare studied with a total frequency of inclusion of thirty-two.

Table B gives information as to the types of plays studied at each grade level. The first sub-column of each grade level is devoted to the number of different plays according to types; in the second sub-column, the frequency of inclusion of those plays. Thus, for example, in the twelfth grade there are eighteen different one-act plays with a total frequency of inclusion of twenty-seven times.

The following lists give the names of the different plays studied at each grade level.

#### PLAYS STUDIED IN SEVENTH GRADE

##### One act (non-Shakespearean):

Barnaby Lee — Anna M. Luetkenhaus  
Every Boy — Anna M. Luetkenhaus  
Sailing West to Find the East — Margaret Parsons  
The Christmas Guest — Constance D'Arcy Mackay  
The Knave of Hearts — Louise Saunders  
The Snow Witch — Constance D'Arcy Mackay  
The Three Wishes — Constance D'Arcy Mackay  
William Tell and the Apple — Friedrich Schiller  
Young Michael Angelo — Constance D'Arcy Mackay

##### Radio-drama:

Rip Van Winkle — James M. Morris

#### PLAYS STUDIED IN EIGHTH GRADE

##### Plays by Shakespeare:

A Midsummer Night's Dream  
As You Like It  
Julius Caesar

##### One act (non-Shakespearean):

Nevertheless — Stuart Walker  
Spreading the News — Lady Gregory  
The Evil Kettle — Lord Dunsany  
The Princess Marries the Page — Edna St. Vincent Millay  
The Sentimental Scarecrow — Rachel Field  
The Violin Maker of Cremona — François Coppée  
What Men Live By — Virginia Church

##### Radio-drama:

A Christmas Broadcast — James Robert White  
Brazil — Wyllis Cooper  
By the Dawn's Early Light — Irene Cameron

## PLAYS STUDIED IN NINTH GRADE

## Plays by Shakespeare:

A Midsummer Night's Dream  
As You Like It  
Julius Caesar

## One act (non-Shakespearean):

House of the Heart — Constance D'Arcy Mackay  
Master Skylark — Anna M. Luetkenhaus  
My Lady's Lace — Edward Knoblock  
Nevertheless — Stuart Walker  
Not Quite Such a Goose — Elizabeth Gale  
The Brink of Silence — Esther E. Galbraith  
The Grand Cham's Diamond — Allan Monkhouse  
The Mad Tea Party — Alice Erya Gerstenberg  
The Patchwork Quilt — Rachel Field  
The Valiant — H. Hall and R. M. Middlemass  
Silver Lining — Constance D'Arcy Mackay  
Spreading the News — Lady Gregory  
Young America — F. Ballard and P. Franklin

## PLAYS STUDIED IN TENTH GRADE

## Plays by Shakespeare:

As You Like It  
Julius Caesar  
The Merchant of Venice

## Five act (non-Shakespearean):

She Stoops to Conquer — Oliver Goldsmith

## Four act (non-Shakespearean):

The Piper — Josephine P. Peabody

## Two act (non-Shakespearean):

The Pirates of Penzance — Sir William S. Gilbert

## One act (non-Shakespearean):

Allison's Lad — Beulah M. Dix  
A Night at an Inn — Lord Dunsany  
Ashes of Roses — Constance D'Arcy Mackay  
Enter the Hero — Theresa Helburn  
Sham — Frank G. Tompkins  
Spreading the News — Lady Gregory  
The Beau of Bath — Constance D'Arcy Mackay  
The Grand Cham's Diamond — Allan Monkhouse  
The Little Father of the Wilderness — A. Strong and L. Osbourne  
The Lost Silk Hat — Lord Dunsany  
The Medicine Show — Stuart Walker  
The Trysting Place — Booth Tarkington

The Valiant — H. Hall and R. M. Middlemass  
Trifles — Susan Glaspell  
Wisdom Teeth — Rachel Field  
Yellow Jack — P. deKruif and S. Howard

Radio-drama:

The Fall of the City — Archibald MacLeish

PLAYS STUDIED IN ELEVENTH GRADE

Plays by Shakespeare:

Julius Caesar

Five act (non-Shakespearean):

She Stoops to Conquer — Oliver Goldsmith

Three act (non-Shakespearean):

Abe Lincoln in Illinois — Robert E. Sherwood

One act (non-Shakespearean):

A Night at an Inn — Lord Dunsany

Evening Clothes — Zona Gale

Finders-Keepers — George Kelly

Ile — Eugene O'Neill

In the Zone — Eugene O'Neill

Poor Aubrey — George Kelly

Sam Average — Percy MacKaye

Sham — Frank G. Tompkins

The Emperor Jones — Eugene O'Neill

The Last of the Lowries — Paul Green

The Londonderry Air — Rachel Field

The Medicine Show — Stuart Walker

The Neighbors — Zona Gale

The Sleeping Car — William D. Howells

The Trysting Place — Booth Tarkington

Trifles — Susan Glaspell

Where But in America? — Oscar M. Wolff

Where the Cross Is Made — Eugene O'Neill

Radio-drama:

The Gentleman from Paris — Robert Tallman

PLAYS STUDIED IN TWELFTH GRADE

Plays by Shakespeare:

Macbeth

Five act (non-Shakespearean):

She Stoops to Conquer — Oliver Goldsmith

The School for Scandal — Richard B. Sheridan

## Four act (non-Shakespearean):

Merton of the Movies — George S. Kaufman and M. Connelly  
 The Admirable Crichton — Sir James Barrie

## Three act (non-Shakespearean):

Strife — John Galsworthy  
 The Skin Game — John Galsworthy

## One act (non-Shakespearean):

A Night at an Inn — Lord Dunsany  
 Everyman — Anonymous  
 Helena's Husband — Philip Moeller  
 Ille — Eugene O'Neill  
 Noah's Flood — Anonymous  
 Riders to the Sea — John M. Synge  
 Shall We Join the Ladies? — James M. Barrie  
 Spreading the News — Lady Gregory  
 The Boy Comes Home — A. A. Milne  
 The Chester Pageant of the Deluge — Anonymous  
 The Maker of Dreams — Oliphant Down  
 The Old Lady Shows Her Medals — James M. Barrie  
 The Rising of the Moon — Lady Gregory  
 The Second Shepherd's Play — Anonymous  
 The Twelve-Pound Look — James M. Barrie  
 The Workhouse Ward — Lady Gregory  
 Wurzel-Flummery — A. A. Milne  
 X-O — John Drinkwater

## Frequency of Inclusion of Plays:

Frequency of inclusion is used here to mean the number of times a play (or plays) is included in one or more of the textbooks surveyed.

The eighty-eight different plays in the fifty-four texts surveyed have a total frequency of inclusion of one hundred fifty-five. Twenty-five of these plays have a frequency of inclusion of ninety-two. (For this breakdown by name and number of frequency of inclusion see the last column of Tables C and D.) The other sixty-three plays have a frequency of inclusion of only one.

## Correlation in Grade Placement:

Correlation in grade placement is used here to indicate that a play is included in two or more of the texts surveyed at the same grade level *only*.

An examination of Table C will show that only eleven plays have a correlation in grade placement. It will also be noted that, with the exception of one play in grade ten, all correlation is in

TABLE C  
CORRELATION IN GRADE PLACEMENT

Name of play and author	7	8	9	10	11	12	Freq. incl.
Macbeth.....	...	...	...	...	...	12	12
William Shakespeare							
Strife.....	...	...	...	...	...	2	2
John Galsworthy							
Allison's Lad.....	...	...	...	2	...	..	2
Beulah M. Dix							
Everyman.....	...	...	...	...	...	2	2
Anonymous							
Riders to the Sea.....	...	...	...	...	...	5	5
John M. Synge							
The Boy Comes Home.....	...	...	...	...	...	2	2
A. A. Milne							
The Emperor Jones.....	...	...	...	...	2	..	2
Eugene O'Neill							
The Neighbors.....	...	...	...	...	3	..	3
Zona Gale							
The Rising of the Moon.....	...	...	...	...	..	2	2
Lady Gregory							
Where But in America?.....	...	...	...	...	3	..	3
Oscar M. Wolff							
Where the Cross Is Made.....	...	...	...	..	4	..	4
Eugene O'Neill							

the eleventh and twelfth grades. It is interesting to note that "Macbeth" is the only play with one hundred per cent correlation. This play appears in each of the twelve twelfth-grade texts surveyed.

#### Discrepancy in Grade Placement:

Discrepancy in grade placement means that a play is included in two or more of the texts surveyed at two or more *different* grade levels.

Table D shows a grade range discrepancy of from two to five grades. Such a play as "Trifles" is listed in the tenth and eleventh grades (two grade discrepancy) while "Spreading the News" has a five grade discrepancy. Of the twenty-five different plays with a frequency of inclusion of over one, fourteen have grade discrepancies; the other eleven have correlation in grade placement.

#### Conclusions:

In drawing conclusions from this report, it must be borne in mind that the report covers only fifty-four textbooks throughout the six grades. However, the data presented here may be an index

TABLE D  
DISCREPANCY IN GRADE PLACEMENT

Name of play and author	Grade range disc.	7	8	9	10	11	12	Freq. incl.
A Midsummer Night's Dream....	2	..	1	5	..	..	..	6
W. Shakespeare								
As You Like It.....	3	..	1	1	4	..	..	6
W. Shakespeare								
Julius Caesar.....	4	..	1	2	3	1	..	7
W. Shakespeare								
She Stoops to Conquer.....	3	..	..	..	2	1	1	4
O. Goldsmith								
A Night at an Inn.....	3	..	..	..	1	1	3	5
Lord Dunsany								
Ille.....	2	..	..	..	..	2	1	3
Eugene O'Neill								
Nevertheless.....	2	..	1	1	..	..	..	2
Stuart Walker								
Sham.....	2	..	..	..	1	2	..	3
F. G. Tompkins								
Spreading the News.....	5	..	1	2	1	..	1	5
Lady Gregory								
The Grand Cham's Diamond.....	2	..	..	1	2	..	..	3
A. Monkhouse								
The Medicine Show.....	2	..	..	..	1	1	..	2
Stuart Walker								
The Trysting Place.....	2	..	..	..	2	1	..	3
B. Tarkington								
The Valiant.....	2	..	..	1	1	..	..	2
H. Hall & R. M. Middlemass								
Trifles.....	2	..	..	..	1	1	..	2
S. Glaspell								

to the trends and practices found in other texts published between 1932 and 1945.

1. As might be expected, there are more one-act plays studied than any other type. However, it is interesting to note that 44.6% of the total number of acts are contained in the two- or more act plays and the remaining 55.4% are in the one-act plays and radio-dramas.

2. The study shows that of the twenty-five plays with a frequency of inclusion of more than one, 56% have grade range discrepancies; the other 44% have correlation in grade placement.

3. "Macbeth" seems to be the play most frequently studied in high schools. As noted previously, it is also the only play with 100% correlation in grade placement. Of the eleven plays having grade placement correlation, only two of these ("Macbeth" and "Strife") have more than one act.

4. "Spreading the News" has the highest grade range discrepancy. Of the fourteen different plays with grade range discrepancies, four are five-act plays; the other ten are one-act plays.

5. This study indicates that one-act plays are studied throughout the six years; plays by Shakespeare are introduced in the eighth grade; and the two-, three-, four-, and non-Shakespearean five-act plays are introduced in the tenth grade.

6. The study of the radio-drama seems to be a quite recent development. Four of the five plays of this type included in the fifty-four textbooks were printed in texts published in 1944.

7. Of significance to the classroom teacher is the large number of plays apparently suitable for study by junior and senior high school students. The teacher may choose from this large number those best suited to the interests and abilities of her students.

8. A careful study of the correlation and discrepancy tables should be valuable to the teacher. These tables show that the editors are in agreement upon the grade placement of some plays but at wide variance upon the placement of other plays. Where the correlation is high, the teacher will probably be inclined to teach those plays at the agreed grade level. In teaching those plays with a wide grade range discrepancy, the teacher will probably study carefully the needs, interests, and abilities of her individual classes before assigning the plays to a definite grade level.

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# Taking the Spinach Out of Shakespeare

By JEANNETTE KLEMOLA

University of Illinois '47

Nearly every high school student in the United States, at one time or another during his English studies, is confronted with the plays of William Shakespeare. To most students, the situation is similar to meeting a long talked about celebrity for the first time. The name is familiar and interesting, but the celebrity turns out to be less glamorous than expected — wears a toupee, for instance, or speaks with an unintelligible accent — and the first meeting is looked upon as the last. Many students, in fact, having met Shakespeare, walk away with a feeling of decided animosity.

Nevertheless, Shakespeare is fed to high school students, freshmen to seniors, unremittingly year after year. There must be some reason. There is. Shakespeare's plays are entertaining, exciting, thrilling, inspiring. If students fail to discover this, the fault must lie, not in the plays themselves, but in the way they are taught. A teacher can make or break a student's enthusiasm for Shakespeare, depending upon how she introduces the man to her classes.

There are, I think, at least three common "schools" of teaching Shakespeare. They are the Spinach School, the Bronze Pedestal School, and the Detective School. Each one, in its way, contributes much toward snuffing out any spark of enthusiasm for Shakespeare cherished by the student. In general, only the toughest-spirited students manage to escape with their original spark still glowing brightly.

The Spinach School of teaching Shakespeare operates on the theory that "it's good for you" to know something about the plays of Shakespeare. The plays are forced upon the students to make them cultured in much the same way spinach is forced upon a child "to make his hair curly." If the child objects on the grounds that he does not want curly hair, the exasperated reply is, "Well, eat it anyway; it's good for you." Some teachers, finding a discouraging lack of desire on the part of students to become cultured,

resort to assigning famous passages to be memorized in a kind of dim hope that the future, in which the student will recognize the value of the work, will bring gratification.

Unfortunately, most children learn at an early age to see through their parents' dissimulations, and the faintest suggestion of "it's good for you" is automatically translated to "whatever it is, I won't like it." Psychologists tell us that learned behavior patterns are hard to break. Is it any wonder, then, that a similar appeal as grounds for the study of Shakespeare should cause a similar reaction? The Spinach School is doomed by its very aim. The student comes to look upon Shakespeare with the same suspicious foreboding that he eyes a teaspoonful of medicine topped by a peppermint cream. The reward is not sufficient to dispel the bitter taste.

The Bronze Pedestal School might be said to err in the opposite direction. Here, instead of being filled to the saturation point with Shakespeare, the student is cautioned to stand away so far that the features of the exquisite bust atop the high pedestal are blurred by the light of its glittering halo. Taught to grovel in the dust on his knees before the Almighty Playwright, the student scarcely dares raise his eyes to glimpse the hallowed work of his pen. Instead, the teacher, like a High Priestess, reverently imparts the universal truths:

Shakespeare, the playwright, is one playwright: there is no other playwright before him (nor after).

The critics declare the glory of Shakespeare: and the scholars show his handywork.

Other dramatists die, their plays are forgotten: but the plays of Shakespeare will stand forever.

The love of Shakespeare is the beginning of knowledge: but fools (i.e., students) despise wisdom and instruction.

The student who enters this school, bareheaded, stares abashed at the idol before him. Convinced that he could never hope to understand it all, he bows timidly and backs out, closing the door softly behind him.

The Detective School, on the other hand, operates with business-like method and precision. At the very beginning of the class, Shakespeare is described in a police-report manner. His appearance, as far as known, age, occupation, and place in which

last seen are presented clearly and factually. Then the plays are brought forth as evidence of the man's occupation. The student, supervised by the teacher-chief, follows a finger down the page, noting carefully all the passages that might give additional information about the man. So many metaphors, similes, figures of speech, etc., prove that Shakespeare was a poet; type of act division, number and kind of scenes, suggested actions, etc., prove that he was a dramatist during the Elizabethan Age; Latin quotations, references to other works, etc., prove that he went to school. The possibilities are endless.

The ambitious student might be spurred to explore, on his own, evidence of Shakespeare's favorite color, Shakespeare alias Bacon, or any number of intriguing topics. This exercise is fine for the student who plans eventually to enter the Secret Service, but to the average student the Detective School is dull, grinding work. The plays are mines of hidden information, source material for oral and written reports, and little else. Any suggestion that Shakespeare's plays might be regarded as something to read or see for pure enjoyment tends to be met with sceptical expressions of incredulity.

In opposition to the Spinach, Bronze Pedestal, and Detective schools, there is the archie school. The archie school is founded upon the principle that Shakespeare is fun, is written for the "common man," and is enjoyable reading. The gifted humorist Don Marquis, according to his own confession, had an interesting cockroach friend, archie. archie would type his experiences on Don Marquis' typewriter, but, since he could not operate the shift key and had difficulty with punctuation, his documents were unique in form and appearance.

One night archie told how he "got acquainted with a parrot named pete" who used  
to belong to the fellow  
that ran the mermaid tavern  
in london.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> don marquis, *archie and mehitabel*, "pete the parrot and shakespeare", doubleday doran and company inc, 1936, new york. Note: The book is printed entirely in lower case, without punctuation. All following quotes are from the same source.

pete had often heard a bill shakespeare at the tavern  
boring his friends about what  
he might have been and done  
if only he had a fair break .

Some of pete s recollections of bill s conversations give an illuminating picture of the man and his attitude toward his work:

i might have been a poet  
if i had kept away from the theatre

slap stick comedies and  
blood and thunder tragedies  
and melodramas say i wonder  
if that boy heard you order  
another bottle frankie  
the only compensation is that i get  
a chance now and then  
to stick in a little poetry  
when nobody is looking .

Discussing the theatrical tastes of the london public, bill says anyone could write a play to satisfy it

. . . if he puts enough  
murder in them what they want  
is kings talking like kings  
never had sense enough to talk  
and stabbings and stranglings  
and fat men making love  
and clowns basting each  
other with clubs and cheap puns .

Then he outlines the manner in which he starts to write a new play:

the manager hands me some mouldy old  
manuscript and says  
bill here s a plot for you  
this is the third of the month  
by the tenth i want a good  
script out of this that we

can start rehearsals on  
not too big a cast  
and not too much of your  
damned poetry either  
you know your old  
familiar line of hokum  
they eat up that falstaff stuff  
of yours ring him in again  
and give them a good ghost  
or two and remember we gotta  
have something dick burbage can get  
his teeth into and be sure  
and stick in a speech  
somewhere the queen will take  
for a personal compliment and if  
you get in a line or two somewhere  
about the honest english yeoman  
it s always a pretty good stunt

but i don t need to tell  
you bill you know this game  
just some of your ordinary  
hokum .

With this view in mind of a family man worried about money:

i need the money i ve got  
a family to support down in  
the country ,

who can't quit the "rotten business":

i can t i can t says bill  
i ve been at it too long i ve got to  
the place now where i can t  
write anything else  
but this cheap stuff ,

the student comes closer to a real understanding and enjoyment  
of Shakespeare. Here was a man who wrote plays the people  
liked and, since people do not change too much, still like.

The student should be allowed to discover what Shakespeare has to offer on his own level of enjoyment before he is forced into an artificial "appreciation" of the playwright. If the student enjoys low comedy, the teacher could point out such passages in the particular play at hand, and, perhaps, suggest others in other plays. If "stabblings and strangling" are his meat, certainly there is plenty of it to be had in Shakespeare. If, as sometimes happens, the student really loves poetry, there is no doubt that the plays of Shakespeare will prove a thrilling discovery to him.

Shakespeare has some sort of appeal to make to everyone. In the archie school, the teacher does her imaginative best to see to it that everyone finds something enjoyable in Shakespeare. Only with initial enjoyment comes real appreciation, with real appreciation comes greater enjoyment.

# Announcement

ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Spring Meeting

Saturday, April 12, 1947

Bismarck Hotel, Randolph and LaSalle, Chicago

10:30 Business Meeting.

11:00 Talk by Miss Dorothy Lake, Evanston High School. Miss Lake is an exchange teacher from England and will tell us about English schools.

12:30 Luncheon. \$2 per person. Reservations must be placed with Ellen Burkhart, Benton, Illinois, by Tuesday, April 8.

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## Further Apologies

Our November issue carried a note of apology for our failure to include several schools on the honor rolls published in the October issue. Through a further confusion, Peoria Central was given recognition which should have gone to Pekin Township High School. We now owe apologies to Peoria and Pekin. Peoria Central High School, with an average of 3.278, was correctly ranked in third place in Honor Roll I, Section A, as originally published. Pekin Township High School, with an average of 3.143, should have appeared in twelfth place.

— THE EDITOR

**ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH**  
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